

Commissioner Jane Henney, M.D.
Food and Drug Administration
5600 Fishers Lane, Room 1471
Rockville, MD 20857

2540 '00 JAN -6 A11 '06

Dear Dr. Henney,

I am a physical chemist and a member of the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), but I was also a victim of a severe bone infection of my tibia less than two years ago. My infection was resistant to a large number of antibiotics and doctors were only able to control my infection and prevent the amputation of my leg by using the antibiotic vancomycin. I am grateful that vancomycin proved effective.

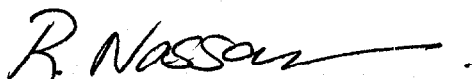
Unfortunately, cases of bacterial resistance to vancomycin, which is often considered to be an antibiotic of last resort have been reported. Evidence suggests that the use of avoparcin a closely related antibiotic used in animal agriculture has contributed to this problem. An equally serious situation is occurring between the valuable antimicrobial synergist and virginiamycin, a growth promoter used in chickens and pigs in the US.

I am sure you are aware of the complex issues regarding bacterial resistance, so I do not find it necessary to reiterate them here, however I would like to express my personal opinion on the use of antibiotics for the growth-promotion of livestock. Before my injury, like most Americans, I knew very little about the contribution of the overuse of antibiotics as growth-promoters, however I believe the times are now changing. This is evident with the steps that the European Union has made to ban growth-promoting uses of antibiotics that may be related to antibiotics used in human medicine. I believe the FDA should make similar steps to immediately ban this type of nonessential antibiotic use.

As a technological leader and an economic leader internationally, it is an embarrassment for the US to be so far behind on such an important issue, simply for the small temporary profit that farmers make. I say temporary because as the media and more citizens become aware of the issue, as well as the EU ban on the import of North American meat, the FDA will eventually have to act. Myself and many others I know who feel strongly about this issue have already taken personal measures and have become vegetarians in order to completely boycott meat-producing industries. While I realize that most Americans will never give up meat completely, the number of vegetarians among the well-educated in urban communities appears to be steadily increasing.

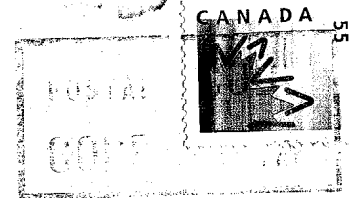
On issues of health and disease or protecting the environment, international borders are nothing more than imaginary lines. It is now time for the FDA to stop the use of antibiotics as growth-promoters in livestock and time for all nations to adopt measures to commit to the responsible uses of antibiotics, as the EU and many individual Americans already have.

Sincerely,



Ray Nassar
raynassar@netscape.net

Ray Nassar
21 Plank Rd.
Holland Landing ON
L9N 1B4



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